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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

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January 4, 2008

Senator Charles Grassley  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

Thank you for your letter of November 27 containing your request that the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry undertake an oversight hearing on the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the Department of Agriculture. I agree that committee oversight of the Office of the Assistant Secretary is warranted, as is broader oversight of civil rights at the Department of Agriculture in general.

Although our Committee will be very busy with conference on the farm bill for early part of this year, your suggestion for an oversight hearing on civil rights at USDA is a good one, and it is my expectation that we will be able to schedule one. I would be pleased to consult with you, Senator Chambliss and other members of our Committee toward scheduling and planning such a hearing.

As you may know, Senator Lugar and I have asked the Government Accountability Office to undertake an independent review of several measures of civil rights performance at the Department of Agriculture, including the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. I am hopeful that its findings will be available to the Committee by the time that we are able to hold an oversight hearing.

Thank you for your interest in this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin  
Chairman